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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7233
INFO RUCNSOM/SOMALIA COLLECTIVE
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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR AF/E AND A/S FRAZER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM KPAO PREL PGOV SO

SUBJECT: Somalia - Journalist Detained in Baidoa

Summary

¶1. (SBU) In an apparent instance of media harassment, a Somali journalist was arrested in Baidoa on October 4, apparently for reporting on two recent events in Baidoa. He was held for approximately twenty-four hours in reportedly dismal conditions and has since been released on bail, but was instructed to remain in Baidoa until police conclude their investigation. Post has inquired with the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) about this incident. End summary.

Another Incident of Media Harassment

¶2. (SBU) Ali Ilyas Abdullahi, a reporter for Radio Horseed in Somalia, was arrested on October 4 for allegedly "critical" reporting on two recent security incidents. Sources state that the arrest was in response to Abdullahi's plan to report on either or both the murder of the district police chief on the morning of October 4 or the attack on the residence of the TFG Speaker of Parliament, Sheikh Adan Muhammad Adan (aka Madobe), on the same evening. Media reports claim Madobe, shortly after the attack on his house, publicly accused local media of siding with the opposition "by favoring their violent acts." Another source indicates the police claim the journalist called the murdered police officer the night before the officer's death, which raised suspicions. Abdullahi claims the officer was a relative with whom Abdullahi often spoke.

¶3. (SBU) A Somali media organization claims this incident illustrates the provincial administration's efforts to quash freedom of the press, even to the extent of threatening journalists. The organization states that the TFG, particularly the officials in Baidoa where political tension is high, have little tolerance for what the officials consider critical reporting.

Post Actions

¶4. (SBU) Post has inquired from multiple sources about this arrest. We are attempting to contact the reporter to let him know of our interest in his case. In addition, we have contacted the TFG's Minister of Information to register our concern. The Minister, who is also Deputy Prime Minister and is usually occupied with tasks apart from media, has not replied. However, in previous cases he has acknowledged our interest several days after the initial inquiry.

SLUTZ